

DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

Vol. 29 No. 1

January 15, 1961

Whole No. 340



DIME NOVEL SKETCHES #19

MIGHT AND MAIN

Published by Winner Library Co. (Street & Smith), 80 issues, Feb. 24, 1906, to August 31, 1907. 8 inches x 11 inches, 32 pages, with bright colored cover. Featured success type stories mostly reprints from Golden Library (published by Geo. Sibley in the 1880's) and Golden Hours.

At Long Last — The Real "Buffalo Bill" Cody!

A Book Review by J. Edward Leithead

It is no small triumph of my life that I have lived to see the real Buffalo Bill emerge from the haze of myth, error and press agent buildup into the truly revealing blaze of the prairie sun and the no less candid glare of Wild West show arena lights. On Nov. 17th, 1960, this definitive biography of William Frederick Cody, boy cattle herder, Pony Express Rider, soldier, buffalo hunter, scout, Indian-fighter, showman (he was all of these) was published. Title of the book, "The Lives and Legends of Buffalo Bill"; the author, Don Russell, editor of the Westerners Brand Book, associate editor of New Standard Encyclopedia, subscriber to Dime Novel Roundup, and the best-informed man on the actual life-story of Buffalo Bill that I've ever met; the publisher, the University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, Oklahoma, which has a long list of the finest items of Western Americana under its imprint, and it is fitting indeed that U. of Oklahoma Press should publish this best of the Buffalo Bill biographies. A really handsome, well-made volume it is, besides!

One reason that "Lives and Legends" is so superior to anything ever written about Cody is that former bi-

ographers only too clearly made little or no attempt at research, they copied each other's errors or let their imagination run wild. Don Russell, on the other hand, took nothing for granted. He went places where Cody had been. He corresponded tirelessly with people in various parts of the West. I know, for I worked with him for three years or more just on the dime novel angle of Cody's career and some phases of the later Wild West show performances, which I saw—I have two files loaded with our correspondence. As Mr. Russell unravels the truth, you'll be surprised how the accepted story of how Ned Buntline met Bill Cody differs from what actually occurred (you see, I assume that you who read this are going to buy the book; if you are even slightly interested in Buffalo Bill, you probably will, and if you're a genuine Buffalo Bill admirer, you positively will!).

Other highlights in Bill's scouting career—the Battle of Summit Springs, where Tall Bull was killed, the fight at Hat Creek, where Yellow Hand was killed—are told in great detail, and so much new and authentic material added you feel that "you were there." There were more eye-witnesses to the

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Cody-Yellow Hand set-to than Lieutenant Charles King (who wrote about it afterward) and Don Russell dug them out.

Nothing in this book is a rehash. Mr. Russell patiently tracked down every bit of information, and it is amazing how many unsuspected sources besides army records were turned up in this manner. Much of this is recorded in footnotes which are as easy to read as the text of the book, and let me tell you it is a fine, smooth job of writing Mr. Russell has done, the interest never flagging for 481 pages (with 24 excellent illustrations in 3 sections of 8 pix each). I think I have read most of what has been printed about Buffalo Bill, including dime novels, yet, once I had started on "Lives and Legends," I didn't want to put it down.

As an example of how error crept into supposed factual accounts of Buffalo Bill's life and adventures, and was repeated without challenge with each new printing, Mr. Russell made this discovery: The original Buffalo Bill autobiography, "The Life of the Hon. William F. Cody," 1879 (there is convincing evidence that Bill did write it himself) "was butchered, and then the rehash was mined for several subsequent autobiographical works, with the most of which Bill obviously had little to do." When published in 1888, a break in the narrative as written by Cody indicated that pages 257 through 262 of the copy "from which the printer was setting the type" had been torn out . . . "whoever was in charge of editing 'Story of the Wild West' rose to the emergency. He faked three pages bearing no resemblance whatever to Cody's original story, but magnificent. The Battle of Summit Springs became three fights . . ."

Of very special interest to dime novel collectors is Chapter 27, "The Dime-Novel Hero." Here, for the first time in a Buffalo Bill biography, you will meet such unsung but skilled writers as W. Bert Foster, William Wallace Cook, John H. Whitson, St. George Rathborne, Robert Russell and

Laurana Sheldon, as well as Prentiss Ingraham and Ned Buntline, who by other biographers of Cody, have always and quite mistakenly been given credit for all the Buffalo Bill novels. There is also a comprehensive dime novel list following the bibliography.

I could fill an issue of Dime Novel Roundup with enthusiastic comment on "The Lives and Legends of Buffalo Bill," but I'm going to let you read the book instead and enjoy it as much as I did. You will. Don't borrow it from the library, but buy a copy for your bookshelf. It's a book you'll want to keep. The price is \$5.95 and, as Ralph Cummings would say, "well worth it, too."

The End

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of Reckless Ralph's Dime Novel Roundup Nos. 1 to 237 for sale.

Ralph F. Cummings
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Fred Should Fear Not; or, Nickel Novels' New Era

By Edward G. Ingraham

A number of times in my teaching career I have wondered what the boys and girls of today would think of the dime novels you and I read when we were eight to fourteen. To satisfy that curiosity, last month I planned a campaign carefully, feeling not so far removed from Nick Carter or Fred Fearnot, as you might suspect.

For many years each incoming group of fourteen-year-olds in the school where I teach ninth grade English have read Shakespear's "Julius Caesar" and Dickens' "David Copperfield." But in this particular day and age, along with these classics (which, incidentally, the students like) what could I say about "Tom Wright, The Railroad Favorite; or, The Raid on the Through Express" (Comrades #4) or "California Claude, The Lone Bandit." (Beadles' Dime Library #321). And harking back to my boyhood days, that old feeling that dime novels had to be kept hidden came back, especially in view of what I now planned to do. What would the parents of our modern students say when, around the supper table that night, the boy or girl would inform Mom and Dad that they had learned a lot about Jesse James that day in English class.

To get started on my campaign, I planted a bound volume of "Young Men of Great Britain" in view on the top of the filing cabinet in the front of the room. Shortly afterward, Steve, one of my students, mentioned something about Edgar Allen Poe. After answering his question, I indicated off-handedly, the volume with its powerful and blood-thirsty illustrations. "That's also a most interesting kind of reading young fellows enjoyed around the time of Poe," I said. A moment later I was holding the volume open at an exciting illus-

tration, but almost immediately placed the story papers back onto the cabinet. "Now let's get back to our regular lesson," I said.

That bit of business paid off the following day, for Steve brought up the subject again. "Would you tell us about those papers?" he asked. And there were numerous agreeable nods and noises.

When I faced two combined ninth grade English classes the following morning, I have to admit I began to wonder what I had let myself in for. When Miss Barnes' thirty students (in a moment of earlier enthusiasm we had invited them) added themselves to my thirty, and all sixty seated themselves into the thirty single desks, I certainly called on the spirit of Sierra Sam. The power to keep quiet those 120 feet sprawled in the aisle for balancing had to come from somewhere.

Instead of that power coming from Sierra, or, perhaps Diamond Dick, the complete interest was captured through a member of the Happy Hours Brotherhood, a member whom I do not know. He is Ralph F. Adimare. In his excellent article, "The Dime Novel, Its Place in American Literature" (Dime Novel Roundup, February 1962) Mr. Adimare mentioned Poe, and I used that material; and Poe's story as related by Adimare stopped all squirming in the room. (At this point may I add a personal note to Mr. Adimare: Thank you for the fine Poe material, Ralph. But for the sake of my high blood pressure, I definitely avoid dwelling on your blasts at Hawthorne and others in your articles. You may besure the impulse is ever present to call out Dick Slater and his Liberty Boys to take care of you.)

For the possible interest of the H. H. Bro. the following list of novels

and papers was used:

Munro's Ten Cent Novels #161—"The Mountain Demon"

Beadle's Half Dime Library #244—"Sierra Sam, The Frontier Ferret"

Beadle's Half Dime #770 "Deadwood Dick's Defeat"

Boys of New York—issue illustrating "Brennan of the Moor" (I no longer have this one and so do not know the date. Miss Barnes, the other teacher in on the dime novel session, managed somehow to persuade me to present it to her for keeps)

Three Chums #40—"Three Chums' Double Win"

Young Wild West Weekly #322 — "Young Wild West and 'Maverick Mike'"

Pluck and Luck #256—"Mad Anthony Wayne"

Liberty Boys of '76 #356—"The Liberty Boys' Crack Shots"

New Magnet Library #1104—"A Great Conspiracy"

There were a few other dime novels used, but these were the most representative ones that I had available. But these had an interesting effect, particularly so, when near the end of the fifty minute period, the boys and girls looked at them closely and handled them. I'm sure the members of the brotherhood will understand the feeling of Bob, one of the students. He took so much time looking at a copy of the Liberty Boys that his friends pushed him away so that they could see the copy. But Bob had his way, eventually, although I did not see him accomplish it. Somehow he "kidnapped" the story; and hiding it under his arms on the desk, he was soon deep into Dick Slater's adventures. So involved had he become, I had to tell him the buzzer had sounded for the dismissal of his class.

To sum up the experiment, I know definitely that the students were fascinated by the pictures, titles, and excerpts that they were able to read in the short period of fifty minutes. For myself, the time was a pleasure indeed. But to be more certain of re-

sults, I assigned the dime novel as the subject for a short composition in class the following day. In the following material I hope the members of the brotherhood will find something of interest in what today's boys and girls think of our boyhood reading. In one or two cases the entire composition of the student is given; in other paragraphs, excerpts or conclusions are cited.

The Era of the Dime Novel

by Nancy Reynolds

"A small chunk of American reading covering three-quarters of a century is the backbone of the truly American story. The dime novel published when that coin was so precious, gave the boys and girls a peep into the world of heroes, villains, and thrilling plots . . . They were thrillers ready to make a person tingle all over. Others took an isolated person into all corners of the world, telling of soldiers in medieval times, spies in England, or heroes in the Wild West Era then just passing into the stronghold of time . . . Galloping right into the woodshed or barn where an enchanted boy sat reading his forbidden pleasure, the hero fought his villains . . . For the average child of yesteryear the dime novel was an almanac, travel magazine, and gazette combined."

If I Had Lived Then

by Paul Sabatini

"If I had lived from the beginning of dime novels . . . I think I would have bought as many as I could. . . . As I said before, dime novels were interesting, exciting, good for capturing imaginations, and thought of as trash by parents."

The Nickel Novel

by Joel Robbins

"They started off small and widely misunderstood by parents; they were thought by them to be worthless, also. (moneywise). Today, though, there is not one adult who would not like to obtain a pack of them."

Helen Davis: "One of the reasons the dime novel became so famous was because it gave America a chance to

read American literature written about America." (Note: Adimare struck gold here.)

Were the Dime Novels Really Bad?

by Stephen Wagner

"Parents never approved of the dime novels which were popular with boys from about 1850 to 1928. They objected to the violence contained in these publications . . . But now one may wonder if the dime novels were really that bad.

Dime novels did contain much violence. They had western stories full of shootings; Revolutionary War and Civil War stories; and detective and crime stories. Covers from several weeklies showed one cowboy whipping a villain; several bootleggers ambushing revenue agents as Fred Farnot prepares to ambush them; and a hero defending an innocent schoolmarm from a man with a shotgun.

However, in these stories the heroes always won. Criminals were always captured, and justice always triumphed.

In present day literature justice does not always triumph. Tennessee Williams' plays are an example of this.

It is awful to think what would happen if youth were subjected to some of Williams' plays. Not only would they be exposed to violence, but they would not have any decent heroes to look up to. They would not acquire a sense of justice or fair play.

Dime novels gave boys fictional heroes to look up to. They proved to boys that "crime doesn't pay," and they gave boys a sense of fair play and justice.

Therefore, dime novels were not really bad. Instead, they played a useful role in sending those who read them down the "straight and narrow" path."

In closing this article on my school experiment, I should like to make one note: in the above composition by young Wagner all his comments, interpretations, and conclusions are his own. We did not discuss in class the moral values he deduces. His paper shows, I believe, that our modern boy has a lot on the ball. He is thinking, too. He could well be your son. Or grandson.

PROFIT AND LOSS STATEMENT 1960

Expenses:

Publishing cost including postage	\$773.50
Photography, Stationery and Advertising	108.60
Total Expenses	\$882.10

Income:

Subscriptions	426.75
Advertising	168.80
Sales, Back issues, etc.	83.75
Contributions	32.00
Total Income	711.40
Net Loss	170.70

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48. Albert D. Stone, 187 Burrill St., Swampscott, Mass. (New address)
230. Paul D. Garborino, 88 Oak St., Stoneham 80, Mass. (New member)

PROTECT YOUR NOVELS

by Charles Bragin

Your dime novels will be worth more money and constantly increase in value if you will keep them out of the air (air ruins the paper) and protect them from dust accumulation, dirt, and soil of handling.

We are often asked—what is the best method—and give our 40 years experience with various products.

The best and cheapest method is to pack away your novels in heavily wrapped packages, sealed. "forget them"—hardly a method to enjoy a hobby.

Binding the novels is recommended only for Libraries, to put away on shelves for future students of Americana. However, this ruins the identity of the novels—they become "books"—not the dime and nickel novels in the format we enjoyed as boys. Also you must stand guard with drawn gun over the binder, to make sure he does not remove the illustrations and cut down the margins to ruin some of the text.

We have used loose-leaf binders, various types, costly and not too satisfactory.

Slip covers—small cartons containing 25 to 35 novels—are good—we have approximately 1,000 of these cartons on our acre of shelves here.

File folders are practical—we have used tens of thousands of these, particularly for our mail shipments of novels.

However all these methods, while practical, do not prevent the air damage and particularly the dirt and damage of handling the novels—and they MUST be handled to be enjoyed.

This handling damage is so serious that Libraries usually keep their dime novel collections in rare book rooms, away from public use. The dime novel collection in the Huntington Library, one of the most valuable, was badly damaged years ago by Hollywood writers who used it for plot material.

We now find an almost perfect method—already used by some collectors—TRANSPARENT ENVEL-

OPES, made of cellophane, plastics, or similar materials, and are arranging to protect all our tens of thousands of novels with these envelopes.

They afford complete protection from dust and dirt, and being fully transparent, allow full enjoyment of seeing and handling—and for display.

NEWSY NEWS

By Ralph F. Cummings

161 Pleasant St., So. Grafton, Mass.

Recently published by T. Nelson & Sons was "Great Moments in News Photography." Among the 57 photographs selected for inclusion in the book was the famous photo of Teddy Roosevelt by our own photography editor, Charlie Duprez. Charlie took the picture of Teddy in 1912 when he was running as a presidential candidate on the "Bull Moose" ticket. The photo shows T. R.—collar slightly crumpled, tie somewhat askew, hands thrust into trouser pockets—showing a toothy smile from the lawn of his Oyster Bay home. Charlie has been entirely too modest about his past photography accomplishments.

Have you seen the Westerners Brand Book lately? This little 8 to 12 full typewriter page magazine sure brings up some of the finer articles on the old good and bad men and women of the West.

The Boston Sunday Globe, July 12, 1959, had a fine article by Edward A. Laycock on "Prof. Morton S. Enslin (of Dennis Port, Mass., and Canton, N.Y.) Has Largest Collection East of the Rockies, Horatio Alger First Editions Bring Fancy Prices," with one picture of an old "Tom the Boot-black" as published by McLaughlin Bros., New York.

The New York Dime Library 1019, Vol. LXXIX, titled "The Ice King, A Story of the Frozen North," by Ned Buntline, and published by M. J. Iver's, N. Y., Dec. 1898. Inside on top of the pages it says The Camp Fire Library, so no doubt these were bought from the publishers of the Camp Fire Library.

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